

Striker turns goalkeeper and stars on night of emotion

IT'S BERNIE THE BRAVE AFTER MASKELL RUSHED TO HOSPITAL

Hendon 1, Wycombe Wanderers 3

WHATEVER has happened in the past, whatever happens in the future, Tuesday, April 6, will go down in legend as the night Wycombe Wanderers earned the 1971 Isthmian League title.

In a match often tingling from deeds that defied superlatives, the Blues, unchanged from the Bromley affair, fought and worked like demons to turn early tragedy into ultimate glory at Hendon's Claremont Road ground.

Three magnificently-taken goals by Tony Horseman, Geoff Anthony and Johnny Hutchinson; 90 minutes of unyielding defence from Keith Blunt, Ted Powell, Ian Rundle and Charlie Gale; non-stop contributions from Larry Pritchard, Barry Baker and Keith Searle—all this and more helped injury-plagued Wycombe throw aside the odds to complete a league 'double' begun last month with a 2-1 win in a blinding rainstorm at Loakes Park.

ABOVE ALL

But, above all else, the name of Bernie Bremer towers proudly after one of the bravest impromptu performances by any player for seasons.

With just three minutes gone, a hand injury forced John Maskell to retire for hospital inspection, leaving Bernie to pull on the 'keeper's jersey for the second time in a fortnight. (He also took over when Kevin O'Brien suffered severe concussion against Corinthian Casuals.)

Hoping that Maskell's trouble was nothing more than a dislocation, manager Brian Lee gambled on continuing with ten men rather than risk his substitute at such an early stage; so from then until the interval, Wycombe gallantly faced Hendon's lively attack with ten men—stand-in goalkeeper and all. But what a great job they did!

While Bremer's exploits drew increasing applause from the hundreds of their supporters around the ground, Wanderers soaked up pressure and even managed to tease the home defence on a number of occasions.

Indeed, despite their disadvantage, Wanderers opened the scoring in the 25th minute. A long, reckless back-pass from Newton Ashman went astray to Horseman, who rammed the ball in at an acute angle while international goalkeeper John Swannell stood out of luck and position. It was a piece of vintage Horseman, pushing him into the lead as top scorer with 45 goals.

One man short, Wanderers were bound to feel the pinch eventually, and hit a tricky patch as the interval approached. Yet Hendon were lucky to have a full complement on the field themselves after the 36th minute, when an incident between Johnny Baker and Powell ended with the home number nine kicking out at his opponent in full view of the main stand. Referee Pond, however, allowed Baker to escape with a short warning.

Sixty seconds later, Hendon's equaliser stung the visitors, Ashman, largely responsible for Wycombe's first goal, made amends by avoiding some tight marking and aiming the ball along the ground with Bremer caught wrong-footed.

But for Bremer's interception, Micky Cooper might have given Hendon a half-time lead when, seconds before the whistle, the

striker barged down Gale's attempted clearance and shot goalwards.

SWINGING ISSUE

In 12 minutes, perhaps the whole issue swung on a split-second decision by the stand-in 'keeper, who rushed at Hendon's Baker, stopping his shot full in the face. Laid out for several seconds, he needed treatment from trainer Jack Shephard, but was quickly back in the fray to punch clear the resultant corner.

Wanderers' persistent wing patrols proved a tactical masterpiece and finally cracked their opponents wide open, thanks to two touches of individual genius.

The first, after 65 minutes, brought a startling volley into the top corner of goal and success at last for the long-suffering Anthony. The second, four minutes later, was even more spectacular—a 35-yard pot shot by Hutchinson, who took quick note of a half-chance with Swannell stranded a long way off his line.

Claremont Road had seen nothing like it since Hendon last won the title in their heyday of the mid-60s. Now, though, the clamour was not for them. Each time the scorer was mobbed by players and excited young fans alike; the crowd all round the ground erupted; and the entire Wycombe "bench" party jumped as one in wild delight.

Even manager Lee, not exactly noted for outbursts of emotion, sprang from his seat with a beaming smile across his face.

LACKED POWER

Three visiting committee men were hastily dispatched to stop the celebrations getting out of hand, so intense became the excitement among the Wycombe contingent behind Hendon's net.

Hendon, lacking strike power, insisted, to their credit, on contesting every action with Wycombe's fighting tigers until the final whistle.

They finished with substitute Tony Slade on for Cooper and both Bobby Wilson and Baker limping. But everything Wycombe's fanatical followers saw—or wanted to see—bore heavy shades of blue.

When Mr. Pond called a halt, they swarmed around their heroes, chairing Bremer off the field in fully deserved triumph. It was an emotional moment not easily forgotten and one which will no doubt stick in Bernie's memory for a long, long time to come.

But the night belonged to Wanderers as a team. For, as president Monty Seymour proudly exclaimed: "This was their finest hour".

How true. Win, draw or lose against Sutton, Oxford City and Ilford—how very true.

● John Maskell is confident his broken finger wouldn't keep him out for long and dispelled fears that Wycombe might have no fit goalkeeper on tour. He hopes to play with the finger strapped up.

● An object believed to be a stone, was thrown at one of the Wycombe supporters' coaches as it left the ground, breaking a window. No one was hurt.

M.W.

HENDON: J. Swannell; D. Hogwood, N. Windsor; P. Deadman, M. Cannon, R. Haider; R. Wilson, N. Ashman, J. Baker, M. Cooper (sub.: A. Slade, 78 mins.), K. Jameson.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: J. Maskell (sub.: G. Anthony, half-time); K. Blunt, C. Gale; E. Powell, I. Rundle, B. Bremer; A. Horseman, B. Baker, K. Searle, L. Pritchard, J. Hutchinson.

Referee: D. Pond.

Attendance: 1,103.

Half-time 1-1. Goalscorers: Hendon—Ashman (37). Wycombe—Horseman (25), Anthony (65), Hutchinson (69).